

Lord Wellington immediately ordered his whole line to advance and attack their position. The French were already attempting a retreat. The Old Guard formed a square to cover the dismayed and flying columns, flanked by a few guns, and supported by some light cavalry (red lancers)."

It was expected that Napoleon would charge at the head of his gallant Guards, but though he certainly exposed his person to great danger towards the end of the battle, he did not put himself at their head as he would have done in the days of Lodi and Arcola.¹ A distinguished writer says : —

"It was about seven o'clock at night when Napoleon determined to devote this proved and faithful reserve as his last stake to the chance of one of those desperate games in which he had been so frequently successful. For this purpose he placed himself in the midst of the highway, fronting Mont St. Jean, and within about a quarter of a mile of the English line.² Here he caused his Guard to defile before him, and acquainting them that the English cavalry and infantry were entirely destroyed, and that to carry their position they had only to sustain with bravery a heavy fire of their artillery, he concluded by pointing to the causeway and exclaiming, 'There, there is the road to Brussels!' The prodigious shouts of 'Vive l'Empereur!' with which the Guard answered this appeal, led the British troops, and the Duke of Wellington himself, to expect an instant renewal of the attack with Napoleon as leader.

"In this, the last charge it was ever to make, the Guard of Napoleon advanced into the plain with demonstrations of enthusiasm. They swept away every obstacle until they attained the ridge where the British soldiers lay on the ground to avoid the destructive fire of artillery by which the assault was covered: but this was their final effort. <Up,

¹ "Ouvrard, who attended Napoleon as chief commissary of the French army on that occasion, told me that Napoleon was suffering from a complaint which made it very painful for him to ride" (*Lord Ellesmere*, p. 47).

² Napoleon had stationed himself on a little hillock near La Belle Alliance, in the centre of the French position. Here he was

seated, with a table
before him, on which maps and plans were spread; and
hence with his
telescope he surveyed the field. Soult watched his
orders close at his left
hand, and his staff was grouped on horseback a few
paces in the rear
(Creasy's *Decisive Battles*, p. 371, edit. 188U).'